

The Banqueting House



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**THE
BANQUETING HOUSE
(AN ALLEGORY)**

by

**EVA ROSE YORK
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THE BANQUETING HOUSE

**He brought me to His banqueting house and His
banner over me was love.**

Song of Solomon 2: 4.

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PREFACE

"The Banqueting House" goes out on its mission accompanied by the unceasing prayer that He Who gave the message may visit with grace and with glory all who read the following chapters.

Application for copies should be made as indicated on page four. But letters of enquiry touching spiritual things, from the unsaved or from God's children, if addressed to Mrs. York personally, will be forwarded to me on tour and will be answered as promptly as possible.

E. R. Y.

CHAPTER I.

HE BROUGHT ME

I could never have come had He not brought me. I lived in a prison, the wall around which could not be scaled; and the iron gate of the wall could not be opened even by the owner and keeper of the prison.

The pity of it was that I was content to remain there, at least for a long time. But one day a strange light penetrated the walls of the prison, and I discovered that the place that I had looked upon as a palace was really a dungeon. As the light grew brighter I began to see how terrible was my condition. Rooms that I had believed to be clean and even attractive were now seen to be dark and cold, the habitation of creeping things. The walls, which in my blindness I had thought to be properly decorated, dripped with unwholesome moisture, patched in places with mildew. The iron bars of the windows were covered with thick rust, large flakes of which fell in upon the floors.

I had grown so accustomed to the darkness that I believed I could see. But when the new light came in I realized that I had been blind indeed to my horrible surroundings. And then, too, I saw that my clothing which I had thought upon as proper and even much to be admired, was only filthy rags. All this was a violent revelation to me; and as day by

day the light grew brighter and I saw my pitiable condition more clearly, disgust and fear filled my heart with a sore sickness. The climax of my misery was reached in the discovery that I was under a sentence of death. This fact had been hidden from me, but was now revealed to me by the new light that had penetrated my prison walls. My escape, therefore, must be effected at any cost.

My first thought was to implore the keeper of the prison to grant me my release. But this petition only made my captivity more bitter and drove farther away all hope of escape. Then I remembered a box of gold that I had hidden in the earth in a corner of one of the cells. Surely that would buy my release. But the keeper took my gold and held me in still closer captivity. I became frantic, and threw my body again and again against the iron bars of my window, for I was now confined to one narrow cell. All was in vain. Bruised and bleeding I fell upon the cold floor of earth in a condition so pitiable and an environment so terrible that the prison walls echoed by my cries for help. Escape was impossible, and I fell into the horrors of despair.

Lying prostrate, hopeless, but still crying out in my hopelessness, I heard a voice indescribably sweet and tender saying:

"Come! Come! Come!"

Covering my face with my hands I cried:

"I cannot come. I am all undone."

At that cry the One Who spoke came to me and bending over me said again:

"Come!"

I was so full of despair that I cried out, trembling violently: "I am here to die!"

Then He was manifestly moved because of my terrible plight, for He spoke with tones of so great love and compassion that I gave way to weeping.

"See!" He cried as He showed me wounds in His hands and feet and side. "See! You need not die, for I have died in your place."

He touched me. At His touch I lifted my head, and so lively a pity possessed me when I saw His sorrowful face that I almost forgot my wretchedness and my danger. Again I fell to weeping, however, for again I saw myself and realized the hopelessness of my condition. Still moved with compassion He said again:

"Come!"

"Like this?" I cried, vehemently.

"Just as you are," He answered.

Heavily the horrors of my condition bore down upon me. Realizing that I was condemned to die I gathered all the powers of my sorely sick soul, and seizing His wounded feet I cried so loudly that the prison walls trembled:

"Take me just as I am."

Immediately, clean and holy though He was, He lifted me into His arms, my filthy rags with me, and carried me out of my cell in haste. As we crossed the corridor, the keeper and his servants came running hard after me. My Deliverer looked toward them and they became as dead men. His arms were both around me for I was well known in the prison.

But He spoke to the iron gate which opened to us and closed again at His word. And I was saved! As the sunshine warmed my face and my hands, and I breathed the pure, sweet air, I shouted for joy, while songs of joy came from above the skies. And He Who had saved me whispered with a holy calm:

“Father, I thank Thee.”

Then, Oh, how I loved Him!

CHAPTER II.

IN THE HOUSE

As soon as I was out of prison my Deliverer stood me upon my feet and said:

"You have need now of a Teacher and a Guide. My Father and I have sent Him to you. You will not see Him, for He is a Spirit, one with my Father and with Me; but He will dwell within you until I come. He will not leave you, and whatever you would know of Me He will teach you."

Then He vanished out of my sight.

Almost immediately I felt a drawing towards a specious structure not far on before me. It seemed to be immeasurable in dimensions and was costly in appearance. Above the door I read in letters of gold: "The Banqueting House."

In a voice so small that I scarcely heard it, my Guide urged me on, endeavoring to assure me that I would be abundantly welcome at the House.

"Indeed," He said, "the House is yours. It was purchased for you by the blood of the wounds that you saw in the prison. I was sent to guide you to it. Whoever escapes from prison has a room in the House ready for occupancy."

Then with evident grief He continued:

"You see that large company roaming around the fields yonder, near those unhealthy swamps. As

I have been given to you, so have I been given to them. For a long time I have been trying to persuade them to enter the House, indeed ever since their escape from prison; but"—

Here His tone was so sad that I knew that He was deeply grieved. I felt ashamed to add to His grief, but I could not believe that there was a room in that magnificent House for me. I wandered here and there adding to His sorrow until I became so weary and so sad that I sat upon a stone and covered my face with my hands. Then my Guide spoke with much emphasis as He told me that He Who brought me out of my cell had no thought that I would do as I was doing, that my conduct must be a keen disappointment to Him, since He had paid so much for a room for me in the House. Would I not go now?

I was willing to go and glad to go. I had found the way of the wanderer a rough way. Then my Guide led me in.

The change in my environment was indescribable. I looked around breathlessly, my heart beating fast with wonderment. But soon a greater wonderment seized me, for I perceived a change in my personal condition. I had been black, but now I was white. This seemed incredible to me; and I retired to a secluded spot in the House hoping that my Teacher would assure me of my changed condition.

When we were alone my Teacher said:

"Yes, you were black, but now you are white. You have been cleansed. The blood of those wounds that you saw in the prison did it. Because your

blackness fell upon Him, His whiteness fell upon you."

Although I did not understand it fully, this assurance brought me great joy. But while my joy was yet full I heard voices outside of the House, some near, others far off. Terror seized me, for I realized that the servants of the keeper of the prison had come for me. I trembled violently and for a moment could find nothing to which I could cling.

"They have come for me," I cried, "and I shall yet die." Then I added:

"But even the keeper could not open the gate to let me out."

"Never to let one out," said my Teacher, "but always to bring one in."

At this word a sore sickness came upon me; and it seemed that I would have died had not my Teacher ministered to me with much tenderness and skill.

"You can never perish," He declared with emphasis. "When you cried to Him Who went into the pit for you, 'Take me as I am,' and He brought you out, then it was that His own life was implanted within you. Then you were new. Then you were white. And that new life is eternal, because it is His life. All the keeper's servants in the prison or out of it cannot snatch you away."

Then I asked:

"But supposing this whiteness should become soiled. Would that make a difference?"

My Teacher was silent for a moment and then replied:

"Provision has been made for the removal of all stains as soon as cleansing is sought with contrition and confession. And besides this, between you and the Son's Father there sits at His right hand the One Who loved you out of the pit. And as He presents to the Father His wounds, pleading for you whom He saved by His death, His Father keeps you eternally safe from the prison keeper and his servants, for His Son's sake."

Then I was glad that I had come into the House, for by faith I saw Him Who went into that vile place to bring me out of my prison now appearing before His Father, showing His wounds as proof that I am out of the prison, never to return. I was so happy that I sang and sang until I fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEACHER'S JOY

Not long after I entered the Banqueting House I was seized with a desire to know more of Him Who had brought me out of my cell. As my desire deepened, hearing the sound of music, I sought a large company of singers thinking they might help me. There was much jubilant conversation when the music ceased and I learned many things that were precious to know. Still the hunger was not satisfied. The longing for a deeper knowledge of Him Who carried me in His arms grew upon me until I felt that I had no place in that rejoicing company. As before, I was led to a secluded spot and there I told my Teacher of my longing to know my Deliverer as many in the House seemed to know Him.

I had no sooner communicated to my Teacher my desire than His joy knew no bounds. Somewhat from His quiet words to me, but more particularly from the book of the House (a Book written long ago by our Teacher) I had learned that it was He Who sent the light into my prison cell, and that He had put the new life within me when I was brought out of prison. But I did not know until the day of

which I am writing that the Teacher's greatest delight is found in making known more fully the One Who saves. And so when I told Him of my longing He led me still farther away from everyone in the House, and as I sat with my eyes closed to my surroundings and my heart open to His message, He said:

"So long ago that your thought could not reach it, in an immeasurable palace of inconceivable glory, the Father, Whom little by little you are coming to know, looked into the future and saw that the people would have sold themselves to the keeper of a prison, hopelessly bound by him under a sentence of never-ending death. With the vision, there came into the Father's heart a love so great that He gave the one Son of His bosom, daily His delight, loved as only holiness can love, to save the people. And the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

"In the fulness of time He came to prison land. There was an angel who spoke, a virgin who listened, and then there was breathed into the surrendered tabernacle of clay the life that had been from times eternal. And the babe Jesus was born.

"Thirty years passed, and one day while walking in prison land He was seen by a prophet. With the joy of a fulfilled hope that prophet cried: 'Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world.' It was the slain Lamb of the eternal past.

"Three years more, and the prison gate flew open. The keeper and all his servants rushed upon

the Lamb, smiting Him and crushing Him to the earth with their cruel ways. Their hatred grew more bitter. There were shoutings from Hell. Then their cruelty had its final vent in nailing Him to a tree. Remembering His Father's love He cried aloud for a word of sympathy. There was no response. He was there in your place. Darkness closed about Him."

When I came into the Banqueting House I was often reminded that my Deliverer had died for me. Indeed I believed it before I came or I could not have been brought out of my cell. But now my Teacher made it all so real that my heart broke with shame and pity and sorrow. I wept aloud for a long while. Sleep forsook me. My Teacher and Comforter was silent. My eyes were so full of tears that I could not read the Book. I passed the night knowing "the fellowship of His sufferings."

As the sun was rising, my Teacher began to comfort me with a comfort greater than any I had yet known. He told me that there was a joy set before the Lamb, the Father's Son, of which joy I would one day know. He told me, also, that when He had died for me His Father was so well pleased that He raised Him from the dead and clothed Him with the glory that He had with His Father before the world was. As my Teacher revealed to me more and more of the resurrection effulgence of my Deliverer, a new light flooded my spiritual being, and I saw the risen One as the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His Person. My Teacher had made Him so real to me!

The light grew brighter. The vision became more ravishing. The joy that I experienced when I was carried out of my cell was scarcely greater than that occasioned by my new vision. As my Teacher continued His blessed ministry, the Son of God unveiled to me His face of matchless glory and beauty, while my Teacher whispered:

"Seeing Him you see the Father also."

Then in the fulness of a new joy I worshipped the eternal God of glory seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

My new joy was the joy of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE BANQUETING HALL

My Teacher had warned me that I must manifest selfcontrol. It was many days, therefore, before I felt that I could trust myself to speak of the glory of Him Who was now ever present with me. The Vision to the eye of faith was so holy that silence seemed to become my new joy.

But one afternoon as I was passing one of the rooms the door of which stood open, the occupant of the room stepped into the hall and walking beside me said:

"You are on your way to the Banquet, no doubt."

"I have not heard of a Banquet," I answered.

"My dear," she cried, with a joyous and holy enthusiasm. "You must not miss it. It was ordered for us in times eternal, purchased for us when the wounds were made, and is now ready to be served to us by our Teacher. The tables will be full, but your place will be waiting for you."

"How many attend the Banquet?" I enquired.

"Everyone in the House," was the reply.

"But the House is everywhere," I exclaimed.

"Yes, the House is everywhere because the prison is everywhere. But we fellowship with those near us. The feast is ready. Will you go in with me?"

Her voice was full of music and her eyes were full of love as she took my hand. She had been in the House for a long time.

Standing upon the threshold of the Hall door my heart was so full that I could not refrain from extolling Him Who had been made so real to me by my Teacher. When I had finished speaking we lingered for a few moments of communion, then entered and took our seats.

My companion was silent for a moment and then said to me:

"All His works praise Him, but none like those who have been delivered from prison and have been brought into the Banqueting House."

At her words, such a love for my Deliverer welled up in my heart that I almost gave way to weeping. But immediately my Teacher brought to my remembrance the victory, the glory, the exaltation of the once slain Lamb and my joy was again full.

I was not alone in my joy. As I looked into the faces of the guests and listened to their quiet con-

versation, I knew that to very many there had been vouchsafed the blessing that was mine. Indeed I soon learned that all in the Banqueting Hall had known, at some time, "the fellowship of His sufferings" and had entered into His resurrection joy.

From my place at the table I could see many who were wandering about in the fields, and I knew that their feet were bruised and bleeding, and that they were suffering hunger and thirst. But why do they remain there? I asked myself. They must surely know about this House and indeed about this feast; for since coming to the table I had learned that the feasts are much talked of outside of the House; sometimes indeed with criticism and even with scorn. As I thought of this a feeling of coldness and even dislike for the straying away ones crept into my heart. Some were in their present plight because of indifference; others, because of wrong doing; others, because of unbelief. There was no need of any of it. Why could they not come into the House and enjoy the feast?

When these thoughts had passed through my mind, the vision of the glorified One began to fade—the first time since that memorable morning. A fear of losing that Face took possession of me and I cried aloud for forgiveness covering my face with my hands. Then my Teacher in His still small voice reminded me of my own wanderings in those barren fields and the persistency with which I rejected His offers to lead me into the House. Again I saw the stone upon which I sat when sad and weary because of the way I had chosen; and again I heard the

pleading of my Guide whom I so ruthlessly grieved. When I had confessed my sin of lovelessness toward the weaker ones the Vision was restored to me: and my Teacher taught me more fully what grace is; unmerited favor. He told me, also, that those upon whom much grace is bestowed are expected by the Son and His Father to deal with the graceless ones in much love and compassion, proportionately as love and forbearance have been shown those upon whom much grace has been bestowed. Then I determined that I would never again judge harshly any one who had been brought out of prison.

CHAPTER V.

THE BANQUET: FIRST SESSION

Presently I heard singing in the perspective of the Hall, for as far as the eye could see there were tables. The music came nearer and nearer, until those within my line of vision joined in the singing. I never heard such singing—strong, but sweet, joyous, but reverent.

At length the music ceased. Silence fell everywhere. It was a time of heart preparation for the moments of talking with God. When the sacred moments had passed my companion said to me:

“As this is the first Banquet you have attended you may find the feast unlike that which you would naturally expect. We always begin with the milk of the word for the sake of the babes who may have come into the House recently and have been led by kind hands to the Banquet. Even though we have drunk of the milk many times before it is never wanting at the beginning of the feast. We must never forget the prison nor our escape from it. After the milk we have the strong meat and then the honey.

When she had spoken I directed my attention to our table which was not so long but that anyone

speaking could be heard by all. The tide of joy was rising. Every face was radiant as a young man began to minister to us, our Teacher giving him utterance. Sitting with the Book of the House open before him, he led us first to Bethlehem. We saw the holy joy in the face of the virgin mother, we heard the cry of the Babe, we felt the awe of the shepherds. The heavenly host seemed to surround us. Then a wonderful peace crept into our hearts and the young man said:

"This is more than the peace with God made by the blood of the Cross; more than peace from God because of sins forgiven: it is the peace of God, His Own peace sent down to us, a good-will peace. If we refuse to forgive, we break that peace, His and ours. All who come out of prison are on resurrection ground, although not all are conscious of it. They are new creations in Christ Jesus, and all who are new in Him are one in Him. If we do not forgive him who is one with us we impute sin to him, and imputing sin to him we impute it to ourselves since we are one. Withholding forgiveness from anyone in Him we stain our own souls."

"What a heart-searcher our Teacher is!" whispered my companion while a fellowship hymn was being sung. I was not singing. Sometime before I entered the House I exchanged unkind words with persons who had been brought out of prison and were wandering about with me in the barren fields. This had not troubled me, until now conscience awoke with the peace message. I resolved that as soon as the Banquet was over I would go out and seek to be reconciled to those to whom I

had become estranged. This resolution restored my peace, and I sang with a joyful heart the song of good-will to men.

The young man continued his ministry. He led us to Calvary.

"Get the meaning of the cross," he said earnestly but reverently. He told us how sin came to our first parents and death by sin; and so death passed upon all for that all have sinned. Then I understood more fully how I came to be in prison. I was there because of the heredity of sin. Receiving this truth more clearly I was eager to get to the prison and in some way help to bring about the deliverance of prisoners: for I said to myself: "If all have sinned through our first parents then all are lost."

It was not long, however, before my thoughts and my affections were fully engaged with the slain Lamb, for the young man told us of the Eternal Sacrifice of the Second Adam—the Lamb—that He might put away the sin of the first Adam. As we sang of the sufferings of Him with the wounds, tears bathed our cheeks and our hearts bled. My Teacher had told me about this when I first came into the Banqueting House, but when we had gathered for the feast it seemed that our love became warmer; our sorrow, keener; our vision, clearer. There was a greater energy of our Teacher, the Spirit of whom I was told when I had been brought out of my cell. In the love of the Spirit we bowed in grief under the shadow of those arms extended in love and forgiveness to a lost and dying world.

When the moments of darkness had passed, the young man continued. He told us that the blood of the wounds of our Deliverer not only sets the prisoner free, but that the new life that the blood gives can hold in complete captivity our old prison life.

"Indeed," he said, referring to the Book of the House, "Indeed, although it is true that we did bring with us from the prison, first to the barren fields and even to this House, the old prison nature, we are enjoined by our Teacher to 'reckon' that old life dead in the absolutely overcoming power of the new. For the new life is the life of Him with the wounds. 'This life is in His Son'—a life that already has conquered sin and death, the grave and Hell, and has been communicated to us for the destruction of the works of the Devil. Therefore, let us 'reckon' the old life as dead."

This was a glorious truth to me. For although I continued in the belief that in my new dress I was spotless in the eyes of the Father and the Son, I was conscious of much within me that I would fain be without. But now, until our Deliverer would come for us, I might look upon it all as forever dead indeed, and rejoice in my freedom from its power. The new was to have dominion over the old. I believed it all, and when some one broke into a song of praise to Him Who gives us this blessed victory, I joined triumphantly in the singing.

The young man continued:

"The blood will never lose its value in the eyes of the Father. Even in the eternal age we shall

drink the wine new with the Son in His Father's Kingdom,—a memorial forever of the finished work of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And now He presents to the Father, through His wounds, His precious blood as the proof that He has accomplished His work in redemptive grace for us as sinners; as the power that delivers us, as believers, from the thralldom of inbred sin; and as a covering, seen by the Father, for the sins of our daily walk, everyone of which, however, must be confessed and thus be cleansed from our conscience by the word of our Teacher."

When He had finished, had not my Teacher restrained me I would have wept for joy, having learned so much of the value of the blood of the Son of God. Then I understood why when the keeper's servants came for me soon after I was led into the House, they could come so far and no farther. The blood of Christ, my atonement, is also my defence.

CHAPTER VI

THE BANQUET: SECOND SESSION

During the intermission that followed the first session of the Banquet, in conversation with one and another, I learned that the purpose of the Banquet is not only to enhance the joy of those who attend by deepening their love and clarifying their vision, but that it is intended to serve as enduement for those called to the wanderers outside of the House or to the prisoners. Everyone seemed to be looking forward to carrying good news to some one; and as I caught the warmth and the glow of their love I too began to long to help others as others had helped me. For during the intermission I learned that my Teacher had sent that light into my cell because of the entreaty of one or more in the House. This seemed very wonderful to me; and the magnitude and beauty of the plan of things holy almost overwhelmed me.

"Does anyone from here ever get into the prison?" I enquired of one who was walking near me.

"Frequently," he answered; and then added: "You will learn more of this at the session now being called."

Taking our seats at the tables as before we

spent some moments in singing praises or in bringing precious things from the Book of the House. Then a man whose hair was white spoke to us. His eyes had been closed, and as he opened them a smile as bright as sunlight lit up his chastened face. He said:

"Beloved, sheltered under the precious blood, we continue to dwell in the heavenly places. Through Him Who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-with He loved us, we died, and our life is hid with Christ in God. But the higher He lifts us the lower does He intend us to reach to others. It was His way,—from immeasurable heights to immeasurable depths. Although seated with Him in the heavenlies, one with Him, one in Him, as dear to the Father as is His Son; having, by faith, entered upon our full inheritance in the Victorious One; victors ourselves, because of our exalted place in Him, over all the power of Satan, the prison keeper; we are, nevertheless, ambassadors for Him to a country which for the present time is under the dominion and the power of His great enemy. There will be conflict. We wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. But the indwelling Christ of glory will be our victory in our service as the exalted Lord of life is our security in our position. When we go forth it must be in the constant remembrance of all that we appropriated by faith this afternoon. We must never doubt that we ourselves are out of prison, new creatures, eternally secure in Him, the new life ever victorious over the old. We must keep our faith steadfast in all this while we dwell constantly in the heavenlies where we belong, and where all things

are ours. There it is that the baser material loses its value. There it is that dross is never mistaken for gold. There it is that fellowship of saints is a foretaste of Heaven. There it is that fellowship with Him is Heaven.

“As I have said, we shall have conflict wherever we go. If we appeal to the wanderers to come into the House the enemy will oppose us. He will tell them that it is enough to be out of prison, or that they are too lame to walk to the House, or that there is not a room for them there. There will be conflict in the barren fields and in the prisons. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm will our Deliverer open the iron gate that we may tell the prisoners that He will deliver them; while wooing and persuasive words will our Teacher put upon our lips as we seek to gather into the Banqueting House the wanderers. We shall no doubt be buffeted by the enemy. Perhaps we shall fall bruised and bleeding. But one touch from Him with the wounds and healing will be ours. Therefore, no matter how fierce the conflict may be, nor how much mire may come upon our garments, let us never forget that we are forever spotless in the eyes of the Holy One. Let us go forth in the unbroken consciousness of our whiteness in Him, speaking only the words that our Teacher gives us, radiating the indwelling glory, and finding our rest and consolation abiding in the heavenly places, our real home. We shall not go alone. The unseen arms will be around us. Love will whisper to us. We shall each go two by two:—ourselves and Himself.”

There was something in these last words that

stirred our hearts in a very tender way, and we would now partake of the sweetness of the feast. All eyes turned to my companion. Timidly at first and then with assurance, she presented to us the One with the wounds as our Heavenly Bridegroom. She spoke of His holiness, His beauty, His power, His wealth, His exaltation; but most of all of His love. On that never-to-be-forgotten morning my Teacher revealed to me the Son's glory, but never until now did He give me to know how much I was loved by Him: loved tenderly, loved immeasurably, loved eternally by One Who is love, Who is holiness, Who is God! And we are not only loved by Him now, but we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; were given to Him when the wound was made in His side; were united to Him when He broke the seal of the tomb. And now we are enfolded in His eternal love as His "Dove," His "Undefiled," to whom He whispers with the benign breath of holiness,—“Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.”

The feast was prolonged in this heavenly way for some time. The blessedness of that hour cannot be told. It was the time of love.

When the session closed I spoke to no one; but I said to myself: I have drunk of the milk. I have feasted on the meat. I have eaten of the honey. Let me go.

Crossing the threshold of the open door of the House I went out into the night to the barren fields and to the prisons.

The End.